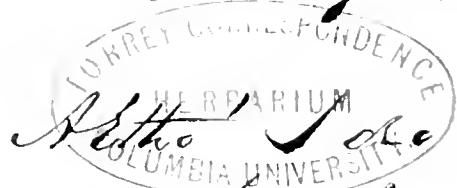


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Gasby Mar 3. 1853

My dear Niece



As tho I do not hesitate to comply with your request that I will state what took place at the opening of the Will of your Uncle Sir John Franklin, yet I do hope that nothing will occur which will render the production of my explanation of the matter necessary.

In November 1851 Lady Franklin asked me if I knew who were Sir John's Executors as she had been recommended to obtain their sanction to a request she was about to make to the Admiralty to be granted a small portion of Sir J. Franklin's pay dispersion, amounting to £ 500. to enable her to discharge what she considered a debt of honor to Sir John Richardson, who had forfeited an insurance on his life to that amount when he went on the Expedition of search for her husband, a fact which had only recently come to her knowledge. Lady F. told me she felt no scruple whatever to ask for this money, without the sanction of the Executors, since she was sure she could do nothing which would be more agreeable to her Husband than respecting this debt of friendship honor, but as Sir John's many Agents had suggested this furnishing a sanction, she thought it right to apply to me thinking I was probably one of the Executors, & knowing that I was Attorney General Trustee for her She thus forwarded which marks enclosed on her & her Father's receipt.

I did not know that I was an

Executor named in Sir John Franklin's Will, but I agreed with the suggestion of the many Friends that the name of the Executor would probably be endorsed on the cover of the Will.

Lady Franklin had been made aware some time previously by her Father, that a will of Sir John Franklin was in his custody, but Mr Griffin was then lying in a state of helplessness in bed, & the key of a chest, in which his papers were kept, was in the hands of his Servant Mr F. Simpson who was living, as well as Lady Franklin, in Mr Griffin's house.

Mr F. Simpson, on being applied to, referred the matter to Mr Griffins Executor, who seeing no objection to the chest being opened for the purpose explained, Mr F. S. came & fetched me from Somerset House to Bedford Place, where in the presence of Lady Franklin he gave me the Will.

The name of the Executor not being endorsed, I opened the Will, & ascertained that I was the sole surviving Executor. I did this in the exercise of my own discretion, unsolicited & un-suggested by Lady Franklin. She neither had nor read the Will nor did she or I venture ask any questions respecting its contents, & it was from my own spontaneous impulse that she learnt one or two facts contained in it.

Mr F. Simpson was present the whole time.

The Will was restored to its place, the cover

being sealed, with 3 seals, one of which is I believe
Mr P. Simpson's, & a memorandum endorsed
by me that I had opened it in the presence
of Lady F & Mr F. S.

The Will was afterwards delivered to me & rem-
ained in my own possession. I told Lady Franklin
that I, as Executor, had no objection to her
application to the Admiralty. She afterwards in-
formed me that she had advised her Nephew
that as he had heard as well as herself more than
they had anticipated, she was sure that he would
feel with her ~~that~~ as far as these facts were
concerned ~~he should~~ not speak of them, to
which he ~~consented~~. Lady F. further assured
me that she refrained from giving any informa-
tion of Secrecy towards the Gells as to the Will
having been opened for the purpose above ex-
plained - I did not see nor communicate the
with Lady Franklin for 2 or 3 days after the
Will was opened, & in the mean time I had
thought it desirable to communicate the
same facts as to the contents
of the Will, which had been hastily uttered
by me in the presence of Lady Franklin.

From letters received from Lady Franklin
as well as from others passed on the above
occasion I can positively affirm that she
desired Sir John's Will to be in my keeping
according to the decided opinion I had expressed

To her, & I have no reason to suppose that she ever entertained the remotest desire or thought of having it in her own possession, nor can I conceive for what purpose she could desire it. I don't know that I can say any thing further on this subject.

Remember me my kind to Lady Franklin
Believe me affly yours

(Signed) — Henry Ellwood

